

PHQ 36119X

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 24 1976

DATE ENTERED AUG 2 1977

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
 Motor Mill Townsite
 AND/OR COMMON
 Motor Mill

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
 Motor Farm

CITY, TOWN

Elkader vic.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

Iowa

CODE

14

COUNTY

Clayton

CODE

043

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☒ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Ernie H. Klink and his sister Mrs. Mabel Klink Pust

STREET & NUMBER

1813 Tenth Avenue

Littleport, Iowa 52055

CITY, TOWN

Belle Plaine

STATE

Iowa

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Elkader Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Elkader

STATE

Iowa

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

—EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
—FAIR

—DETERIORATED
—RUINS
—UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

—UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
—MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Motor townsite is nestled under a steep bluff overlooking the Turkey River a few miles south of Elkader. Included in this nomination are the bridge, the mill, the cooperage, the smoke house, the old inn, and the livery barn. All structures were part of the original town and are in good condition.

The bridge is a Pratt-Truss model, and is basically two segments, with the junction of the two segments resting on a limestone platform set in the river. It is one lane with the road bed made of wooden planks.

The mill is a very large limestone block building with a wood shingled gable roof and symmetrically placed openings. It measures approximately 50 feet wide, 60 feet long and 85 feet high, and is six and one half stories tall. Three sides are laid with carefully chipped and rounded stone, the fourth is laid with square-cut stone. The bottoms of the four original burr stones still remain in place on the first floor. In the basement a portion of the dumb-waiter remains, and scattered throughout the interior are portions of grain shutes. All other original machinery has been removed, and the building is used to store hay. Many of the windows have been knocked out by vandals along with many of the floorboards on all floors. The interior walls are still plastered, and iron rings used to tie up horses are still found imbedded in the north outside wall.

At one time the dam was about 200 feet upstream, and the water entered the mill through two large flume entrances at the lower level. It was claimed at the time of its operation that the large dam and waterwheel located at the mill insured a minimum of 250 horsepower even at low water.

Despite years of neglect, the mill shows no signs of settling; the solid and massive interior beams indicate that the mill should stand another hundred years.

The cooperage is right across the road from the mill and was built at the same time. It is a two and one half story limestone block building with a gable roof (wood shingles now covered with sheet metal).

Like the mill, it features walls of chipped and rounded stone, heavy stone sills and lintel beams, and is now used for hay storage. It has four symmetrically placed windows per floor and an inside end chimney on the east end. The west end has three single openings (with one slightly enlarged to admit farm machinery) but the east end has only two small windows with wood lintels and sills in the top half story, placed on either side of the inside end chimney. Each floor is one large room, with the outstanding feature of the interior huge fireplace in the east end.

Down the road about fifty yards to the west is the smoke house, made out of square cut limestone blocks. It is square shaped with an asphalt covered gable roof. The south side has one small opening, and the west side has a small window and a double wooden door. A lean-to located on the north side of the structure is used for hay storage. The building itself is now used for the storage of oats.

Turning the corner and going another 50 yards down the road to the north is the old Motor Inn, now a farm house and still in very good condition. Built out of uncoursed limestone and rectangular in design, it has a small porch on the second floor in the southeast corner. The windows, (six over six lights) are placed symmetrically and have stone lintels and sills. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

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CONTINUATION SHEET One

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE Two

The old livery barn stands next to the old inn and is built next to the bluff to accomodate easy entrance of animals and machinery to the second floor. The basic structure of the barn is still evident although its appearance has been changed in order to make it adaptable as a modern barn. Specifically, the roof has been raised, a shed added to the southeast corner, and the original sliding door altered.

Other buildings in the immediate area and not included in this nomination include a brick chicken coop, a garage and assorted other farm-related structures and sheds.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
— PREHISTORIC	— ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	— COMMUNITY PLANNING	— LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	— RELIGION
— 1400-1499	— ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	— CONSERVATION	— LAW	— SCIENCE
— 1500-1599	— AGRICULTURE	— ECONOMICS	— LITERATURE	— SCULPTURE
— 1600-1699	— ARCHITECTURE	— EDUCATION	— MILITARY	— SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
— 1700-1799	— ART	— ENGINEERING	— MUSIC	— THEATER
X 1800-1899	— COMMERCE	X EXPANSION SETTLEMENT	— PHILOSOPHY	— TRANSPORTATION
— 1900-	— COMMUNICATIONS	X INDUSTRY	— POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	— OTHER (SPECIFY)
		— INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1861-82

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Motor townsite is significant as an abandoned town still containing many of its original buildings. In addition, the towering Motor Mill remains in structurally solid condition and is one of the few remaining mills in Iowa.

Motor was founded in the early 1860's when three men, John Thompson, J. P. Dickinson and James O. Crosby formed a partnership to build a grist mill, saw mill, farm and a town at the site of what they modernistically called Motor. It was to be located at the site of an earlier saw mill called Hastings Bottom. Flushed by their recent successful founding of Elkader, they were also confident of creating a prosperous town at Motor.

They started in 1867 with the construction of the mill and the cooperage, according to local tradition employing German stone masons from the nearby town of Communia. Construction was completed in late 1869, and by 1870 the mill was in operation. An advertisement in the Clayton County Centennial boasted that, "oats, rye and barley are ground for stock feed, corn is turned into meal, buckwheat ground for pancake flour, and wheat is milled into bread and pastry flour."

With the mill prospering, Motor was officially platted in 1875, and plans were made for the expansion of the town. An inn and a livery stable were built, and Mr. Thompson and company also made plans for railroad service to Motor. The McGregor Times reported in December, 1874 that:

"The Eastern (narrow gauge) has been completed to the mouth of Dry Mill Creek and within four miles of Motor. A station house has been erected and Patrick Heendan is station agent. The work on the Motor extension is to be prosecuted during the winter without cessation."

The railroad never made it, however, as a flood washed out all of the ties and the cost of repair was, apparently, too much for the railroad company to overcome.

Although the failure of the railroad's arrival effectively sealed the town's doom, the mill continued in operation for a few more years. By the 1880's, however, chinch bugs had invaded the area, driving out the area wheat farmers. This final blow finished off the town; the mill was apparently closed by 1882. The original partnership dissolved into legal squabbling, and the property was auctioned off by district court in 1891. Mr. Louis Klink purchased the property in 1903; sold the mill machinery and used the remaining buildings for his farm operations. The townsite is now owned by his children, Mr. Ernest Klink and Mrs. Mabel Klink Pust, who rent the land for farm purposes.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Clayton County Register, February 6, 1974.

Cartsens, Walt, Cedar Rapids Gazette, Renowned Motor Mill is Ghost Town's Monument, page 1 and 3.

Keehn, Randy, "The Flour Mill at Motor, Iowa", (paper kept at Garnavillo Historical Society).

Swisher, Jacob. Iowa, Land of Many Mills. Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, (1940), pp. 93-95, 110

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 17 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	15	634860	4740710	B	15	634870	4740710
C	15	634710	4740375	D	15	634915	4740410

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ernie H. and Dorothy E. Klink

ORGANIZATION

DATE

9/25/73

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1813 Tenth Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Belle Plaine

Iowa

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☐

LOCAL ☒

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE 5.13.76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

Addenda, #8; Estimated dates of construction:

Mill: between 1867 and 1869

Cooperage: between 1867 and 1869

Inn: unknown, possibly in late 1870's

Livery Stable: probably 1870's, but after 1868 (that year a blacksmith arrived in the town)

Smokehouse: unknown, but possibly the same time as the Inn

Bridge: begun 1868, completed 1869

Note: The mill was practically the only reason for the town's existence, and is known to have been losing money by the 1880's, so it is most likely that the inn and livery barn were built before then.

Addenda and Revision, #10:

- A. Revised UTM: A: 15/634875/4740720
B: 15/634920/4740460
C: 15/634730/4740420
D: 15/634730/4740420 ~~680~~
670

Verbal Description: W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ north and east of the Turkey River, T92N R4W, Sec. 6

Boundary discussion: The boundaries of the Motor Mill townsite are fairly arbitrary. The townsite is located within a very much larger area, all of which is owned by the Klink family. The boundaries of the townsite have been drawn to include all of the structures listed in the nomination (plus several agricultural structures which are later additions and unrelated to the town of Motor: this property is a working farm), and the wooded area to the top of the bluff behind the structures on the east side of the river, which is important for the "setting" of the townsite, as is the road itself and a narrow strip of land on the west side of the road. During the time period concerned in this nomination, the road was a link between Communia and points south, and the county seat, Elkader, and other towns, to the north. Proximity to this road, as well as river conditions suitable for milling purposes, probably determined in large degree the spot chosen for the town of Motor.